

BOOK REVIEWS

Understanding Cyberbullying: A Guide for Parents and Teachers

By Mona O'Moore

Reviewed by AUDREY JOHNSTON, a teacher at St. Catherine's Special School, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow.

Professor Mona O'Moore, the author of this book, is the founding director of the National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre. She has vast professional experience of working with schools, individual children, parents and teachers and has written widely on the topic of bullying. Her latest book provides an in-depth analysis of the challenges presented by cyberbullying. It clearly and concisely provides the reader with valuable and comprehensible knowledge of the topic. It is both practical and user-friendly.

The book is divided into three parts. Part One describes cyberbullying. It explores the significant overlap between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. It draws attention to the distinction between the methods of cyberbullying – email, text, etc. and the many forms of cyberbullying. These forms or tactics are listed and the associated terminology is explained. Statistics detailing the prevalence of cyberbullying in Ireland are presented. Two equally important questions are posed, 'who are the victims of cyberbullying?' and 'who are the cyberbullies?' The answers afford the reader valuable insight. Further studies are needed to determine whether the socio-emotional characteristics attributed to cyber-victims precede the victimisation or emerge as a result of being bullied. It is acknowledged that lack of research is a limitation when seeking to provide a detailed profile of the cyberbully. However, traits that are found to characterise cyberbullies are considered and the concept of 'deindividuation' explained. In the final chapters of Part One the effects of cyberbullying are explored and effective strategies for coping with cyberbullying are identified.

Part Two presents recommendations for best practice in schools. It explores the whole school community approach and discusses the integration of cyberbullying into the anti-bullying policy; strengthening key understandings, skills and

competencies for all members of the school community; encouraging collaborative school-family relations and developing a positive and supportive environment. Internet safety in particular lessons on cyberbullying, and the teaching of social and emotional skills through the social, personal and health education (SPHE) curriculum are deemed critical and the importance of quality classroom management is highlighted. Strategies for responding to children's concerns and to tell-tale signs are presented and a step-by-step approach to making the intervention is outlined. A major strength of Part Two is that it examines in detail a repertoire of response options that are drawn from up-to-date research and from the author's own professional experience.

The third part of the book focuses on 'cyberbullying and the home' advising parents to be aware that children's knowledge of internet risks may not translate into safe behaviours. Key messages include talking to children and striking a balance between supervision and trust. Of particular assistance to parents is the outlining of practical steps to take if their child is being cyberbullied and the provision of positive effective strategies to implement if their child is cyberbullying others. In all cases a restorative rather than a punitive approach to correcting cyberbullying is recommended.

The final 'gem' this book has to offer is to be found in the Appendix where Murray Smith, barrister at the Irish Bar and research assistant at the Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre, details the legal implications of cyberbullying. The book concludes with an extremely useful resource list including books, online resources and tools and audio-visual resources.

Parents and teachers alike will find this guide a valuable resource. Its up-to-date information combined with the author's vast experience in the area make it essential reading for those of us concerned with understanding cyberbullying.

UNDERSTANDING CYBERBULLYING: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS and TEACHERS by Mona O'Moore, is published by Veritas Publications, Dublin, 2014, and costs €14.99.

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